Flamin' Laptops!

Imagine coming in to work one morning. While you make a cup of coffee, your nose twinges as it detects the distinct smell of an electrical problem. During a survey of the room, your interest is piqued when you see silky streams of smoke ascending from your laptop computer. Your eyes go wide and you let out a muffled profanity as the fluffy smoke flickers into flame.

Coworkers admire your apparent rebellion against technology as you grab the combustible computer and sprint down the hall to the nearest exit. As you watch your 'puter burn, you whistle softly as you consider what might have been, had the fire started an hour earlier, when nobody was around. Then, to your horror, you realize you've got a report due in an hour, the only copy of which is now cremated amongst a clump of charred chips.

So what happened, you ask? Well, it seems the original battery for this laptop died, and was replaced by an after-market battery pack that overheated and burst into flames. The Navy is recommending that its folks ensure they have the right battery in similar laptops so something like this won't happen again.

The big lesson here is that if you replace components in a piece of equipment, whether it's a laptop, your car, or some other appliance, make sure you use parts that are recommended by the manufacturer. Cheaper, third-party or "incorrect but close" parts may end up costing you more.

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